VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

August 2011

Dear Early Childhood Professionals:

Research tells us that the **knowledge and skills of the child care workforce have the most positive impact on the quality level of a child care program**, whether it's center-based or home-based. Virginia is developing the system infrastructure needed to support a stronger, more highly qualified child care professional workforce, and in fact, continues to pilot a quality rating and improvement system, which validates the importance of education, qualifications and training.

Some highlights of the **NEW Virginia Early Childhood Development and School-Age Professional Development System** include the following:

- **Virginia's Early Childhood Development and School-Age Care Professional Development Registry –** Child care professionals will be able to access this registry, enter their education and training activities, have the information validated and mapped to Virginia's Career Lattice (***www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.cgi***), obtain a comprehensive record of their verified education and training history, and receive a Registry Certificate that can be used to market themselves for employment.

- **Virginia Department of Social Services Quality Assurance for Approved Training Courses –** Standard criteria are being developed to ensure that state-approved trainings are of high quality and address the Virginia *Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals* (***www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.cgi***). VDSS-approved training will be monitored and evaluated based on delivery performance and other factors. Curricula will be available for state-approved trainers and training will become market-driven and need-based.

- **Increased collaboration and sharing of resources** across early childhood sectors and organizations (i.e., Home Visiting Consortium; Early Intervention; state agencies for education, social services and health; Project Child HANDS; higher education; non-profit organizations; and others).

NEW courses this semester include:

- **24 NEW classroom-based Early Childhood Endorsement courses** that will expand and enhance the Early Childhood Endorsements, as well as the **ALL-NEW School-Age Child Care Endorsement courses!** The early childhood courses may be used toward the required training needed for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential (pages 7-9).

- Improved access to training with the addition of **53 online Early Childhood and School-Age Endorsement courses** with "anytime" access and automatic certificates upon successful completion of the course. This will help reduce the last minute scramble to find a course being held in time to meet Licensing and/or Subsidy requirements, as well as allowing participants to access training based on their individual needs and schedules (pages 7-9).

- An evidence-based course called **Al's Caring Pals**, offered in partnership with the Virginia Child Care Resource and Referral Network (VACCRRN) for home-based child care providers who work with children ages 3 to 8. This course provides strategies to teach children about self-control, conflict resolution, and problem-solving and includes a **wonderful FREE teacher resource kit** (page 14).

- A **4-hour classroom course entitled Preschool Cognitive Activities: Making Learning Fun!** that includes research-based strategies and activities that providers can use to facilitate the cognitive development of children (page 30).

A NEW resource:

- Under a partnership through the Child Care and Youth Training and Technical Assistance Program with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies' Military Child Care Liaison, **Penn State University is offering all of their Better Kid Care online courses free of charge** for early care and education professionals in Virginia. Courses may be used toward the CDA formal education requirements and are approved for Penn State University's Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Take advantage of this opportunity to dust-off your computer skills and complete the required training. Additional information and resources are provided on page 39.

It is exciting to see all of the great work taking place in Virginia to provide better education opportunities and a more organized system of professional development for child care professionals in the state. It is in your best interest to maintain your knowledge base in early childhood development and/or school-age care and education, keep up with new best practices research, and perfect your teaching strategies. Don't be left behind in the dramatic changes coming down the pike for this profession. Join us as we enhance the quality and expand the opportunities VDSS provides to support your continued growth and professional development.

Thank you for your motivation to improve your skills and join the best qualified early childhood development and school-age care and education professionals in Virginia!

Sincerely,

Kathy D. Gillikin

Kathy D. Gillikin, Quality Child Care Program Manager
Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Development

VDSS Mission:
People helping people triumph over poverty, abuse and neglect to shape strong futures
for themselves, their families and communities.

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